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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -  
ROBERT PALLADINO  
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: NORTH KOREA, CROSS-STRAIT  
RELATIONS

#### 1. North Korea

"[Taiwan] Must Not Overlook the Impact [Created] by  
Pyongyang Declaring That It Possesses Nuclear Weapons"

The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" commented in  
an editorial (2/14):

". Pyongyang's declaration [that it possess nuclear  
weapons], without doubt, indicates that the focus of  
the 'nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula' has pushed  
the previous argument over Pyongyang's ability to  
'manufacture' nuclear weapons to [a new stage where the  
focus is] 'possession' of nuclear weapons. In other  
words, the message that Pyongyang sent to the world was  
that people no longer need to discuss whether North  
Korea needs to freeze its facilities that manufacture  
nuclear weapons. North Korea has, no matter how,  
succeeded in producing nuclear weapons and is thus  
basically a country in possession of nuclear weapons.  
The whole agenda for a meeting will be totally  
different even if the Six-Party talks resume in the  
future. .

". Even though it remains to be seen how the situation  
will further develop [on the Korean Peninsula], one  
thing can be sure: the move by Pyongyang has forced the  
other five countries involving in the Six-Party talks  
to adopt a unified position for the time being because  
the hawks in other countries have all started to  
criticize [Pyongyang]. It will not be too difficult  
for the United States to resolve the North Korean issue  
first before handling the Iran issue as long as it can  
get rid of the mud and dirt of Iraq. China, of course,  
will not be happy to have another bad neighbor that  
owns nuclear weapons and will thus increase its  
pressure on Pyongyang. Taiwan, on the other hand,  
should watch closely whether the whole new chess game  
will again lead to a re-organization of power in East  
Asia."

#### 2. Cross-Strait Relations

"Several Indicators to Monitor the Future of Cross-  
Strait Relations"

The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times"  
editorialized (02/12):

". Monitoring cross-strait relations after the Chinese  
New Year, [we can] possibly adopt a situational factor  
and three dynamic indicators. The so-called  
situational factor is the development of the U.S.-China  
relationship. After President George W. Bush got re-  
elected, it is easy to tell from the several policy  
directions proposed by Secretary of State Condoleezza  
Rice that Washington has adjusted its policy toward  
China from that of strategic-competition to one that is  
more cooperative. On one hand, the United States is  
eager to pull itself out of the Iraqi quagmire, and it  
needs Beijing's cooperation on issues concerning Iran  
and North Korea. Under such a strategic environment,  
Washington, of course, will not allow incidents to  
occur across the Taiwan Strait. Over the past year,  
several issues caused by Taiwan's elections, such as  
the referendum, [plan to] institute a constitution, and  
the names-change plan, have unexpectedly helped to  
establish closer links between Washington and Beijing.  
Several behaviors by the Taipei authority have  
incrementally been interpreted by Washington as  
attempts to 'unilaterally change the status quo,' and  
Beijing has become used to pressuring Taipei  
diplomatically via the strength of Washington. The  
situational factor will likely continue in 2005. In  
other words, Washington and Beijing may have  
differences on several issues but they will further  
understand each other's positions with regard to the  
cross-strait issue. The situational factor will  
further constrain Taiwan's space in the triangular  
relationship.

"Under the constraints of the macro situational factor, the three dynamic indicators we need to examine are: the legislative progress of [Beijing's] "anti-secession law," further negotiations on direct cross-Strait charter flights, and the possibility that a Taiwan delegation visits China, either one led by PFP Chairman James Soong or by Legislative Yuan President Wang Jin-pyng. ."

PAAL